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TO : THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON

November 19, 1954

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SUBJECT: Possible New Party Alignments in Indian-Occupied Kashmir

The Embassy transmits two items bearing on the above subject. One from The Statesman, November 3, 1954, has to do with the recent Conference of the Jammu and Kashmir Socialist Workers, chaired by the PSP Socialist leader ASOKA MEHTA. The other, from the Times of India, November 9, 1954, concerns a meeting of the General Council of the Jammu Praja Parishad, which subsequently decided to affiliate with the All-India Jan Sangh.

The Socialist proceedings, it will be noted, questioned the effectiveness of accession of Kashmir to India in terms of the welfare of the general public, suggesting it was primarily of advantage to the leadership; they accented the need for Indo-Pakistan amity to offset "outside interference," deplored the growing Communist influence in the State administration, the curtailment of civil liberties, and demanded the release or trial of detenus.

The Praja Parishad meeting, at which PREMNATH DOGRA, President, was the best known figure, reiterated the well-known slogan "one flag, one constitution, and one President," and again asserted the necessity of complete integration with India. Dogra, denying the "existence" of the R.S.S. in the state, tempered his statement with praise for its patriotism and went on to indicate by implication the support which the Parishad had previously had from the Jan Sangh and to question the practicability of Parishad operations, disassociated from the All-India Party. (The General Council subsequently voted to affiliate with the Jan Sangh, and the Working Committee of the Jan Sangh voted to authorize the affiliation of the Jammu Praja Parishad.) The Parishad proceedings called for both new municipal elections in Jammu and State-wide elections to the Assembly.

The Socialist venture into Jammu and Kashmir State has been forecast since last August. The formal launching of a branch of the PSP at this time, following the 20th plenary session of the National Conference, is very likely of some significance. Had the Conference actually demonstrated the solidarity of the group, it is unlikely that the PSP would have ventured to make its bid at this time. A contrary situation seems to be in the making as attested by the continued opposition of the group in the Constituent Assembly led by ABDUL GANI GONI, HAKIM, HABIBULLAH and HAMDAMI. It is the Embassy's opinion that this opposition is more widespread than the Indian press commonly

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admits and that the PSP has perhaps sensed a psychological moment to enter the field. In its plea for the release or trial of detenus (which would include ABDULLAH) it has a rallying point for the substantial residue of pro-Abdullah Kashmiri, and a means of embarrassing both Bakshi and Sadiq elements in the National Conference.

It was evident throughout the long drawn-out Jan Sangh agitation of November 1952-July 1953 that there was a close linkage between the Jammu Praja Parishad and the Jan Sangh. It has become equally obvious in past months that Jammu Dogra elements have chafed under their handicaps in representation, both locally and in the State executive and administrative services. That they now perceive an opportunity to capitalize on factionalism within the Conference is evidenced by formal affiliation with the Jan Sangh and an open courtship of support from members of the former R.S.S.

The parallel moves by the PSP and the Praja Parishad have in common an expressed apprehensiveness of the growing influence of Communists in the present government of Indian-occupied Kashmir. This, presumably, is shared by the Bakshi wing of the National Conference. It is difficult, however, to find very much other common ground among the three non-Communist groups. There are thus four principal political groupings in the making: the new Socialist party, the reinforced Praja Parishad - henceforth associated with an all-India party, the Bakshi wing of the National Conference, and the Sadiq following.

It seems doubtful that the PSP or the Parishad or both can force new general elections in Kashmir for many months to come, though locally they may have some success. It does seem likely, however, that they may seriously weaken the Bakshi wing in the National Conference and to this extent perhaps contribute to Communist strength. Another result of the emergence of these groups may be to hasten the tempo of GOI efforts to ameliorate economic and social conditions in the areas of Kashmir under its control. Aside from the likelihood that GOI support will be maintained, and perhaps increased, the position of Prime Minister BAKSHI would appear to be an increasingly difficult one.

For the Ambassador:

Richard S. Leach
First Secretary of Embassy

Enclosures:

1. Article from The Statesman dated November 8, 1954.
2. Article from Times of India, November 9, 1954.

cc: AmConGens Bombay, Calcutta, Madras
AmEmbassy, Karachi.

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